

Political Science 244c
Chinese Politics: New Voices and Issues
Kevin J. O'Brien

Thursday, 9am-11am
Spring 2021
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Office Hours: By appointment
Location: Everywhere

Course Description

This course focuses on emerging issues in the field of Chinese politics, and (mostly) younger authors who have published books and articles since 2010. It leans towards state-society relations and local politics rather than high politics or the central state. Topics covered include: control and accountability, signaling and information, online expression, censorship and self-censorship, living with repression, protest and protest control, rights and rules consciousness, people's congresses and representation, big data, and policy implementation and experimentation.

Books

- 1) Diana Fu, Mobilizing without the Masses: Control and Contention in China (Cambridge, 2017) (paperback)
- 2) Rongbin Han, Contesting Cyberspace in China: Online Expression and Authoritarian Resilience (Columbia, 2018) (paperback)
- 3) Daniel Mattingly, The Art of Political Control in China (Cambridge, 2019) (paperback)
- 4) Kevin O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, Rightful Resistance in Rural China (Cambridge, 2006) (paperback)
- 5) Molly Roberts, Censored: Distraction and Diversion Inside China's Great Firewall (Princeton, 2018) (paperback)

Course Requirements

4 seminar papers (40% of course grade) -- Due on Tuesday evening (5 pm) of the four weeks for which a student is responsible. (Copies should be sent to the e-mail addresses of all students and, of course, to the instructor). Each paper (approx. 3-4 double-spaced pages) should critically engage the readings assigned for that week. Students may focus on gaps or conflicts in one (or more) readings and may bring in relevant material from other courses. The purpose of these papers is to stimulate class discussion. Papers should not be a summary but rather an effort to highlight an important point, a methodological issue, an area of disagreement, and/or an assumption that underlies or permeates the reading(s). Efforts should be made to explore ways in which the readings relate to each other and how they help us improve our understanding of politics and China. During class, each author should be ready to explain (and expand upon) the points raised. Hint: When preparing your papers, pretend you are an overburdened student racing to figure out "why this reading is so important" the night before your qualifying exams. You might also consider how the readings speak to other areas of political science (or other regions of the world) with which you are familiar.

A 15-20 page research paper (40% of course grade) or a final exam (2 out of 3 essay questions, approx. 4000 words total)

Week 4 **Online Expression**

Rongbin Han, Contesting Cyberspace in China: Online Expression and Authoritarian Resilience

Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts, "How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, not Engaged Argument." American Political Science Review 111:3 (August 2017): 484-501

Student Discussants:

1) 2) 3)

Week 5 **Censorship**

Margaret Roberts, Censored: Distraction and Diversion Inside China's Great Firewall

Student Discussants:

1) 2) 3)

Week 6 **Self-Censorship and Living with Repression**

Self-Censorship:

Rachel Stern and Jonathan Hassid, "Amplifying Silence: Uncertainty and Control Parables in Contemporary China," Comparative Political Studies 45 (10) (2012): 1230-54

Dimitar D Gueorguiev, Li Shao, Charles Crabtree, "Blurring the Lines: Rethinking Censorship Under Autocracy" (at ssrn.com)

Sheena Greitens and Rory Truex, "Repressive Experiences Among China Scholars: New Evidence from Survey Data," China Quarterly 242 (June 2020): 349-75

Living with Repression and Avoiding Conflict:

Sarah Lee and Kevin J. O'Brien, "Adapting in Difficult Circumstances: Protestant Pastors and the Xi Jinping Effect," Journal of Contemporary China, forthcoming

Elizabeth Perry, "Educated Acquiescence: How Academia Sustains Authoritarianism in China," Theory & Society 49 (2020): 1-22

Lawrence Liu and Rachel Stern, "State-Adjacent Professionals: How Chinese Lawyers Participate in Political Life," China Quarterly, forthcoming

Week 7 **Policy Implementation and Misimplementation**

Problematic Implementation:

Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, "Selective Policy Implementation in Rural China," Comparative Politics 31:2 (January 1999): 167-86

Jie Gao, "Pernicious Manipulation of Performance Measures in China's Cadre Evaluation System," China Quarterly 223 (September 2015): 618-37

Christian Göbel, "Uneven Implementation in Rural China," China Journal 65 (January 2011): 53-76

Ciqi Mei and Margaret M. Pearson, "Killing a Chicken to Scare the Monkeys? Deterrence Failure and Local Defiance in China," China Journal 72 (July 2014): 75-97

Responding to Non-Compliance:

Denise van der Kamp, "Blunt Force Regulation and Bureaucratic Control: Understanding China's War on Pollution," Governance, forthcoming

"Good Enough," Effective and Enthusiastic Implementation:

Maria Edin, "State Capacity and Local Agent Control in China: CCP Cadre Management from a Township Perspective," China Quarterly 173 (March 2003): 35-52

Anna L. Ahlers and Gunter Schubert, "Effective Policy Implementation in China's Local State," Modern China 41:4 (July 2015): 372-405

Yanhua Deng, Kevin J. O'Brien and Jiajian Chen, "Enthusiastic Policy Implementation and its Aftermath: The Sudden Expansion and Contraction of China's Microfinance for Women Programme," China Quarterly 234 (June 2018): 506-26

Student Discussants:

1) 2) 3)

Week 8 Policy Experimentation: Successes, Partial Successes and Failures

Sebastian Heilmann, "Policy Experimentation in China's Economic Rise," Studies in Comparative International Development 43:1 (2008): 1-26

Wen-Hsuan Tsai and Nicola Dean, "Experimentation under Hierarchy in Local Conditions: Cases of Political Reform in Guangdong and Sichuan, China," China Quarterly 218 (June 2014): 339-358

Christian Göbel and Thomas Heberer, "The Policy Innovation Imperative: Changing Techniques for Governing China's Local Governors," in To Govern China: Evolving Practices of Power, Vivienne Shue and Patricia M. Thornton (eds.) (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 283-308

Jieun Kim and Kevin J. O'Brien, "Understanding Experimentation and Implementation: A Case Study of China's Government Transparency Project," unpublished paper

The Xi Era:

Jessica C. Teets and Reza Hasmath, "The Evolution of Policy Experimentation in China," Journal of Asian Public Policy 13:1 (2020): 49-59

John Yasuda, "The Other Side of Uncertainty: The Perils of Policy Experimentation in Post-Reform China," unpublished paper

Student Discussants:

1) 2) 3)

Week 9 **People's Congresses: Representation?**

Rory Truex, "A Theory of Authoritarian Representation," Chapter 2 in Making Autocracy Work (Princeton, 2016), pp. 15-45

Melanie Manion, "Authoritarian Parochialism: Local Congressional Representation in China," China Quarterly 218 (June 2014): 311-38

Tomoki Kamo and Hiroki Takeuchi, "Representation and Local People's Congresses in China: A Case Study of the Yangzhou Municipal People's Congress," Journal of Chinese Political Science 18 (2013): 41-60

Chuanmin Chen, "Getting Their Voice Heard: Strategies of China's Provincial People's Congress Deputies to Influence Policies," China Journal 82 (July 2019): 46-70

Kevin J. O'Brien, "Agents and Remonstrators: Role Accumulation by Chinese People's Congress Deputies," China Quarterly 138 (June 1994): 359-80

Private Benefits:

Rory Truex, "The Returns to Office in a 'Rubber Stamp' Parliament." American Political Science Review 108:2 (May 2014): 235-251

Yue Hou, "Protection from Predation," Chapter 5 in The Private Sector in Public Office (Cambridge, 2019), pp. 102-120

Student Discussants:

1) 2) 3)

Week 10 **Rights Consciousness vs. Rules Consciousness and Legal Consciousness**

Elizabeth J. Perry, "Chinese Conceptions of 'Rights': From Mencius to Mao—and Now," Perspectives on Politics 6:1 (March 2008): 37-50

Lianjiang Li, "Rights Consciousness and Rules Consciousness in Contemporary China," China Journal 64 (July 2010): 47-68

Peter Lorentzen and Suzanne Scoggins, "Understanding China's Rising Rights Consciousness," China Quarterly 223 (September 2015): 638-57

Legal Consciousness:

Mary E. Gallagher, "Mobilizing the Law in China: 'Informed Disenchantment' and the Development of Legal Consciousness," Law & Society Review 40:4 (2006): 783-816

